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A current digest of media, polls and significant interviews and events.

Tuesday, March 23, 2004

Archives: 9 IMRA interviews with Hamas Head Rantisi

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IMRA- 23 March, 2004 : It was announced today that Abdel Aziz Rantisi has taken the place of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as the head of Hamas. The following is a collection of IMRA interviews of Rantisi over the years.

#1 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - MASSACRE THE JEWS

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 8 October, 1997

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 8 October, 1997. The entire interview follows

IMRA: We have heard the comments of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin regarding the occupied territories. When he says 'occupied territories' does he mean the area occupied after 1967 or does he mean all of Palestine?

Rantisi: Occupied territories? Who says occupied territories?

IMRA: He appeared on television saying that there can only be peace when Israel is out of the occupied territory.

Rantisi: Surely those were not the words of Sheik Ahmed Yassin but rather the translator.

IMRA: What did he say?

Rantisi: Sheikh Yassin says "the occupation" not territories - the West Bank and Gaza. When he says the occupation this means the occupation of all of Palestine.

IMRA: Can there be any peace with the Jews as long as there is a state?

Rantisi: The Jews are occupiers. Now, let's say that you make peace with Jews as Jews but they are still occupiers. It is impossible to make peace with them when they are occupying your home.

IMRA: That's anywhere in Palestine.

Rantisi: I am speaking about my country. The majority of Palestinians are out of their homes. We have now in exile around four million Palestinians who are living very tragic lives. They should return home.

IMRA: So Israelis - the Left, who say they you can make peace if you make a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza are living a fantasy?

Rantisi: With the withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza?

IMRA: Yes. The Israelis from the Left say that if Israel withdraws from the West Bank and Gaza that there can be peace even if there is an Israeli state in the remainder of the area - Jaffa, Haifa etc.

Rantisi: Look, where are you from?

IMRA: The States.

Rantisi: Can you accept Jews to establish Israel in your land and make peace with them after that?

IMRA: If there wasn't a state, could the Jews who live in this area now stay or some of them stay or what?

Rantisi: When the Jews were oppressed in Europe they found a good citizenship under the umbrella of an Islamic state. So we are welcoming religions as religions. As Jews and Christians from anywhere. But we will not accept any occupiers.

IMRA: Every year there are tens of thousands of new people coming into the area. What about these newcomers?

Rantisi: You should ask what about the fate of the four million living in camps.

IMRA: What do you see ultimately happening to the people who moved into Israel. We have the people who came from Europe, Russia, the Arab states.

Rantisi: I will tell you something. I feel that it is justice for us to do with Jews as they did with us.

IMRA: To let them stay?

Rantisi: In the same way that they dispossessed our people. They killed thousands of Palestinians in tens of massacres and they destroyed homes. So I think it is just to do with them as they did with us.

#2 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - HAMAS WILL CONTINUE CALL FOR STRUGGLE

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 16 November, 1997

This weekend Hamas leader Ibrahim Makadmeh came out of hiding and returned to his Gaza home. Israel believes the Makadmeh is linked to a series of terrorist attacks.

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 16 November, 1997. The entire interview follows:

IMRA: I wanted to ask you about the return of Ibrahim Makadmeh to his Gaza home. Did he make any promises to the PA to remain silent, not to be active politically or anything like that?

Rantisi: No. But I myself promised that Dr. Makadmeh would be a politician and not a military leader, as they thought. I told the PA that Makadmeh was a political figure and he will continue just as a political leader.

IMRA: Was he only a political leader before?

Rantisi: Yes. He was a political leader. I promised that he would continue as that.

IMRA: So whatever he did in the past he will continue doing the same in the future?

Rantisi: I told then that if he would continue underground then there is the possibility that he would act as a military leader. We want him to be a political leader and they agreed and so we closed that file.

IMRA: As a political leader he can say things in favor of military actions but he can't plan them?

Rantisi: For example, you heard Sheik Yassin. He can freely say the things he believes. Just the things which are forbidden is a violation of the law.

IMRA: So he can call for attacks against Israel but he just can't plan them?

Rantisi: We said, as political leaders - either me or Sheik Yassin, for example, that if the occupation will continue then Hamas will continue the struggle. We did not speak about operations as operations, since the political wing is completely separate from the military one. But we talk about ideology of Hamas. And the ideology of Hamas is that the continuation of the occupation is the continuation of the struggle. And Makadmeh can say that easily.

IMRA: And the continuation of the struggle is a struggle which includes actions by the military wing.

Rantisi: All kinds of struggles. Because our Israeli enemy uses all kinds of aggression: killing and destroying homes and arresting people, Judaization of Jerusalem, building settlements. They use all kinds of aggression against human beings. Against Palestinians. And they continue still going on in their occupation of our land. We want to liberate our land. If they will give us our rights peacefully we will be happy. But if they refuse the only way there is is to continue our struggle using all means.

IMRA: So the political wing of Hamas doesn't call for any limitations or restrictions on the scope of the activities of the military wing.

Rantisi: We have a political wing and a military wing and both are wings of one organization So we have the ideology, the same thinking, the same strategy and the same goals.

IMRA: But does the political wing turn to the military wing and say "do this but don't do that - throw rocks at settlers but don't blow up bombs in Tel Aviv." Does it say anything to the military wing?

Rantisi: No. Not at all.

IMRA: Did it ever?

Rantisi: No. From the beginning it was difficult for both wings to act together or for the military wing to get its instructions

from the political wing because of the security conflict here. So we prefer that the military wing be free with its leaders. Just its leaders can direct the action and we choose complete separation between both wings.

IMRA: Are the military wing leader located inside the PA or overseas?

Rantisi: I believe that Israelis and the PA talk about two underground leaders. I believe that the military leaders are who are inside but underground.

IMRA: You were quoted as saying last week that in terms of actions that Hamas would take actions but not ones which would hurt the PA. Is that the position of the political side or, the military side of both?

Rantisi: I think this is the position of the military side. Because the political side really knows nothing about operations carried out before they take place.

IMRA: You are saying that Dr. Makadmeh could have become active on the military side - so its possible for someone active on the political side to switch over to the military side?

Rantisi: I said that if you continue in putting pressure on one person to keep him underground then he will think to act as a military one rather than as a political one.

IMRA: So its possible for someone from the political wing to switch to the military wing.

Rantisi: No. He will act by himself. No need to join the military wing.

IMRA: What do you mean himself? He will go out by himself with a gun or a bomb?

Rantisi: Yes. I am talking about things which have occurred in this area. If you are going to put someone in a corner then you will push him to be aggressive.

IMRA: How old is Dr. Makadmeh.

Rantisi: 45.

IMRA: So you are saying that he himself sneak into Israel and do something.

Rantisi: If I will be underground for the time and hiding from the

PA I can't keep myself inside a room without thinking about doing something.

IMRA: Last Thursday night two members of the Tzurif cell, Ismail Ranimat and Gamal Jibril Alhour, were captured by Israeli forces when they were in one of Jibril Rajoub's cars. Do you think it was a set-up between the PA and Israel?

Rantisi: This is one possibility. The second possibility is that collaborators working inside PA's secret forces tipped the Israelis off.

#3 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - PALESTINIAN POLLS ARE FADED TO BACK FATAH

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 13 December, 1997

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 13 December, 1997. The entire interview follows:

IMRA: The Center for Palestine Research & Studies just released a poll of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and their survey finds that support for Sheik Ahmad Yassin has plummeted since his release. Back in November of 1994 the poll showed that 20% would vote for Ahmad Yassin if elections were held for President of the Palestinian Authority, two weeks ago less than 3% said they would vote for Ahmad Yassin. The poll also found that if elections were held today, less than 12% would vote for Hamas while 43% would vote for Fatah.

Do you have some explanation for why Sheik Yassin and Hamas do so poorly in the polls?

Rantisi: Regarding the results you show that Hamas has less than 12%.

IMRA: Yes, less than 12% while Fatah got 43%.

Rantisi: The results in the last elections at An-Najah University gave 40 seats for Hamas and 35 seats for Fatah. So we really do not trust these polls and we believe that they are run without any scientific program. It's not a scientific one. It's just a political tactic or something for propaganda and nothing else.

IMRA: Do you think that Dr. Shikaki is just acting for Fatah?

Rantisi: I am not criticizing anyone. Because Dr. Shikaki did not do it by himself. I asked one of them how they do that poll and they tell me that they go to homes and choose one of the members of the home and they ask them and many of our people get afraid from those who are coming and they can't say no for Arafat and yes for

Yassin so we really do not trust any one of these polls.

IMRA: It's interesting because they have another question in the poll asking people if they think that there is corruption in the PA and 63% of the people were willing to say that there is corruption in the PA institutions. You would think that if they were afraid they would be afraid to say that too.

Rantisi: They try to show that their results are correct by putting in some figures. They want to shift us to look for corruption and forget the political deterioration of the peace process etc. Really, we believe that they are clever and they surely do that.

IMRA: They also show a result that more people insist on a state in all of Palestinian rather than just Gaza and the West Bank - which is something that does not go with the official line of the PA - and they published that result.

Rantisi: As I said, I am not trusting at all these polls.

IMRA: What do you think a true result would be?

Rantisi: I can't give any exact figure. If the supporters of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza were to vote for Sheik Yassin he would get more than 40% - and that's just the supporters of Hamas. How can I trust these polls. Don't forget that not only universities but these institutions: the UNWRA elections in Gaza - all the seats with Hamas, the engineers association, Al-Quds University, An-Najah University, all the institutions in the West Bank - the winner in votes is Hamas all the time. So I think they are speaking about an election poll in Dimona [an Israeli town - IMRA] not in Palestine.

IMRA: Do you think that Sheik Yassin is stronger in the public now that he is out of prison or was he stronger when in prison. Did the mystique of being in prison make him a stronger political force or does his ability now to meet with people face to face make him stronger?

Rantisi: I believe that Sheik Yassin was strong when he was in jail and now he is also strong. I believe that he is stronger now. Even more respectable. I would not make a comparison between Sheik Yassin and Arafat because it's not our will to compete with the PA in that meaning. We are not seeking seats - we just are struggling for liberation.

#4 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - PEACE ONLY WHEN ISRAEL CEASES TO EXIST

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 29 December, 1997

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 28 December, 1997. The entire interview follows:

IMRA: You were quoted In al-Quds on the 27th saying that the struggle with Israel is, among other things, a cultural struggle, and it won't end until this element of the struggle no longer exists. Is this a change in position? Before you were talking about hudna [a temporary cease fire agreement].

Rantisi: I said before and I am saying now that we are not struggling against Jews as Jews. We are struggling against occupiers. We are defending our people. And until the occupation of our land ends we will continue our struggle. We are just defending our people, our land and we do not do anything against Jews. We lived with Jews and we shared before with them as neighbors and citizens in one state and up until now you can see the Jews and the Christians in Syria and Yemen. So we can live peacefully with each other but we are against occupation.

IMRA: When you say occupation of land you mean all of Palestine?

Rantisi: Where are you from originally?

IMRA: From the U.S.

Rantisi: I hope that some time in the future the Jews will establish another state in the United States of America and they will call upon you to coexist with them and accept their occupation of your land. I don't know what you would call the struggle there - terrorism or something else.

IMRA: So you are saying in any part of Palestine.

Rantisi: Everybody in the world knows that the Jews came in 1948 and they occupied our land, uprooted our people from our land and so we consider all of Palestine now under occupation.

We gave our proposal to stop the bloodshed in our area for a while. A temporary truce so that we can live in peace in this area. Stop the bloodshed and leave it up to the coming generations to solve this problem.

IMRA: Do you find that Hamas supporters are discriminated against in the Palestinian army? That they are not allowed to hold senior positions. Does affiliation with Hamas hurt people's chances to advance in the army or police?

Rantisi: Not at all. Anyone who joins the army or police will not be a member of Hamas anymore.

IMRA: They have to leave Hamas to join the police?

Rantisi: Yes. Because Hamas forbids their supporters and members to be in the police.

IMRA: One would think that the security forces are, from a political standpoint, one of the major centers of power in the PA. What's the logic behind denying yourselves, from a political standpoint, leadership within one of the centers of political power in the PA?

Rantisi: Hamas would encourage its supporters and members to join and to be in any army the aim of which is the continuation of the struggle against the occupation. Hamas will not share in any force whose aim is to prevent the struggle.

IMRA: And that's how you view the PA's security forces today?

Rantisi: The Palestinian security forces have clearly declared that they will stop any kind of operation against the occupation. How can the members of Hamas share in these forces?

IMRA: So there aren't any religious people in the police - just secular?

Rantisi: I am not speaking about the degree of religious belief of anyone. You may see religious people who are in the secret police but they are not members or supporters of Hamas. Not everyone who is religious is a Hamas supporter.

IMRA: There are others who are religious but do not support Hamas?

Rantisi: Yes. The majority of Palestinians are religious but not all of them are members or supporters of Hamas.

IMRA: So there are other religious figures, for example in Gaza, with a following?

Rantisi: We do not say and we will not say in the future that the only ones who will go to Paradise are the members of Hamas. No. Or that the religious have to be members of Hamas. Nor will we say that in the future.

IMRA: So there are other religious leaders with the same status as Sheik Yassin?

Rantisi: They are religious and we respect them. We can't say that they should be members or supporters of Hamas.

IMRA: Are their political views different from those of Hamas in

terms of their views of the Arab Israeli conflict or are you talking about other matters?

Rantisi: The Arab-Israeli conflict is just because the Israelis came from overseas and took our land and dismissed our people and so we are suffering now because they uprooted us from our land.

IMRA: Would you say that the other religious officials share Sheik Yassin's view of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Rantisi: There is a difference between us and other parties that we consider the liberation of our land - the liberation of our occupied land - as a part of our religion. We can't give up even one centimeter of our land to occupiers. Not just in Palestine but everywhere. Take for example in the United States, you would not give New York to the Cubans.

IMRA: Actually, there are negotiations going on between the USA and Canada over resolving border disputes and there may be some land transferred. Now are you saying that this view about land is particular to Hamas or is this view that there can be no compromise on land is shared by all the religious authorities.

Rantisi: All the religious - not just in Palestine but in the entire Islamic world - believe that they should not give up their land to anyone because the Koran ordered us to liberate our land and to defend it from the occupiers.

IMRA: That applies also to parts of Spain as well.

Rantisi: I am speaking now of Palestine [laughs].

IMRA: Historically there were parts of Spain which were under Moslem control.

Rantisi: I am speaking now about Palestine. I am not talking about France.

IMRA: But these areas were also, by the same token, under Islamic control.

Rantisi: It's up to our religious leaders who can give a fatwa on this. But I am a politician and I am only speaking about our land in Palestine.

#5 SHEIK YASSIN TO GET DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT? RANTISI YES, ISRAEL - NO

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 7 January, 1998

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English,

and Shlomo Dror, Spokesman for the Coordinator in the Territories, in Hebrew, on 6 January, 1998:

IMRA: It was reported in Al Quds that Sheik Yassin is getting a diplomatic passport from the Palestinian Authority (PA). How do you see this? As a reconciliation?

Rantisi: No. It's just that he tried to get an ordinary passport and the PA advised that if the passport is a diplomatic one it will be easier for Sheik Yassin to travel.

IMRA: Will the passport enable him to avoid problems with Israelis at the border?

Rantisi: Yes, yes. They said that.

IMRA: Is this something new for the PA in their relations? Were you surprised?

Rantisi: No. It's a normal thing.

IMRA: Is the diplomatic passport just for Sheik Yassin or is it also for his family?

Rantisi: Just for Sheik Yassin. Sheik Yassin will travel just for treatment. His wife can travel easily without it.

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IMRA: Abdel Aziz Rantisi says that Sheik Yassin is getting a Palestinian diplomatic passport. Does this have any significance with regards to how Israel will treat him at the border?

Dror: Rantisi should first go and learn the Interim Agreement. There is no such thing as a Palestinian diplomatic passport. Maybe they want to issue him some paper. It would be a violation of the agreement for them to issue such a thing. According to the agreement, there is a Palestinian passport which they are to report to us when they issue so that it is included in the list. If it isn't included in the list then it has no value in affording passage at the border. That passport has no value. When he comes to the border they will check it on the computer terminal and if it isn't in the computer he won't leave.

Everyone has a regular passport. There is no diplomatic passport.

By the way, the PA doesn't have diplomatic offices overseas. Those are PLO offices.

IMRA: So what do they have for VIPs?

Dror: There are VIP cards for people with senior positions in the PA.

IMRA: Also someone visiting can be designated as being an important person?

Dror: There is no problem with them also designating a visitor. The only ramification from our standpoint is at the passages. The issuing of a VIP card requires our consent. Jamil Tarifi submits the request and the Coordinator signs along with him. We can deny the card or grant it. There are a limited number of VIP cards. The quantity was used in the interim agreement and we can agree to increasing the number in agreement with the PA. If the PA wants to increase it from 400 to a larger number they need our consent.

I don't see him getting the VIP card because he has no position in the PA and if they want to give him a position they will have to remove someone from the position and this information will have to come to us and we will still have the option to approve the VIP status or not. If they try to create a new position for him and when we check it turns out that the position doesn't really exist then we can reject it. We can also reject the VIP card for the man himself. There are a number of people who we have taken away VIP cards from because they were taking action which we considered unacceptable.

Now the PA can give him a letter attesting to their considering him a VIP but as far as we are concerned this designation is meaningless.

IMRA: What about VIP visitors?

Dror: They can advise that someone is coming to visit who is a VIP and we can decide to give him special treatment.

IMRA: If a VIP man comes with a suitcase do you check it?

Dror: Under the agreement we can. Generally we allow them to pass in an honorable way.

#6 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - HAMAS WON'T FIGHT PA OVER ARRESTS

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 19 January, 1998

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 19 January, 1998. The entire interview follows:

IMRA: How serious is the PA (Palestinian Authority) crackdown on Hamas now?

Rantisi: Nothing new. Nowadays there is nothing new as compared to what they did before. No change at all.

IMRA: Do you think that the people arrested now will be in prison for a long time?

Rantisi: I can't say yes or no. It's up to the PA to decide because most of them are without charges up to now. So we hope that within the coming few days there will be a kind of freeing for some of them.

IMRA Have you had any indication from any PA official?

Rantisi: No. We are just hoping.

IMRA: What do you see happening if they don't release people now?

Rantisi: We will appeal. Nothing else. Because we will not pass into conflict with the PA. We have just one enemy - the occupiers.

IMRA: It seems that they also have arrested some people from the military wing of Hamas. Do you know anything about that?

Rantisi: No. As you know, there is no connection at all between the political and military wing. So we know nothing about their program and their plan to continue in their operations. It is up to them. I really know nothing about that.

IMRA: The PA announced that the two that they recently arrested will spend a long time in jail. Do you think that this is something that the public will stand for?

Rantisi: We will not accept that, and as I said, we will appeal and we will struggle, peacefully, with the PA to release them. But, as you know, our conflict is with the occupiers and not with the PA and we will keep as peaceful an atmosphere in Gaza and the West Bank as we can.

IMRA: Even if that means that some members of Hamas may would have to stay in jail? Even at that cost?

Rantisi: Yes.

IMRA: When is Sheik Yassin going overseas for treatment?

Rantisi: We hope it will be after the Islamic feast which will be in ten days. You can say after three to four weeks.

IMRA: Did he already receive his diplomatic passport from the PA?

Rantisi: Yes. Sheik Yassin received his diplomatic passport.

#7 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - MILITARY WING HAS NO RELIGIOUS CONSULTANT

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 22 February, 1998

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on 22 February, 1998. The entire interview follows:

IMRA: Sheik Yassin is quoted recently as saying that he knows that Izzadin al- Kassam is prepared to carry out armed operations against Israeli targets if America attacked Iraq. What's the story here? What do you see happening?

Rantisi: Nothing at all. Sheik Yassin denied this story. He said in his denial that they misunderstood him. What he said was that if there would be any strike against the Iraqi people then we can expect that anyone - not only Izzadin al-Kassam - will do things against Israel. So its just guessing or expecting - analyzing what is going on on the ground. This was a misunderstanding of what the sheik said.

IMRA; So it wasn't from personal knowledge that he says that this is what is going to happen.

Rantisi: He said that he knows nothing about what will happen in the future because, really, there is no relationship between the political and the military wings of Hamas.

IMRA: Do they have a religious authority that they check with? If they have a religious question who do they go to? In the IDF there is a chaplaincy corps which handles religious questions, does the military wing of Hamas have religious authorities working directly with them? Some imam working with them who answers religious questions.

Rantisi: In Islam we differ from other religions. We haven't specific persons for religion. We haven't rabbis. And everyone of us can read the texts and can understand his religion and behave accordingly. For example, for the military wing of Hamas, they have their own reference, which is not the political wing of Hamas.

IMRA: But they have religious authorities who they can refer to?

Rantisi: I don't know about Hamas members. All of them, you can say, have a knowledge about their religion and they can judge without any need for a specific man - a sheik- to speak to them. We have fatwas [religious decrees] which is general for bombing etc. - a fatwa from Sheik Yousef al-Haradow , from 25

professors of religion in Amman. They can read these fatwas and act accordingly. Without a specific man on a day to day basis.

#8 HAMAS LEADER RANTISI - HAMAS WILL NEVER ATTACK PA

By: Aaron Lerner Date: 7 April, 1998

IMRA interviewed Gaza Hamas leader Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, in English, on April 7, 1998.

IMRA: Do you see the possibility of a clash between Hamas and the PA (Palestinian Authority) over the Sharif killing?

Rantisi: No. I believe that there will be no clashes at all because our policy is not to clash with the PA.

IMRA: The Israelis have argued that because of this policy there is nothing to prevent Arafat from taking serious steps against Hamas since Hamas will not react against the PA. So the PA can take serious measures against Hamas.

Rantisi: Believe me that the measures which Arafat can take against Hamas will be much less disastrous than a clash between Hamas and the PA.

IMRA: So he can go out and arrest, take guns, etc.

Rantisi: Why arrest?

IMRA: If in order to keep the Americans happy he goes out and arrests people from Hamas.

Rantisi: Just to keep them happy?

IMRA: He is arresting people now, isn't he?

Rantisi: I believe that there is no reason at all to imprison people. I do not believe he will do this because it is impossible to justify the detentions.

IMRA: I do not understand.

Rantisi: The detentions should be reasonable. Without that what will Arafat say to his people? Just detention for detention sake?

IMRA: The argument has always been made that what stops Arafat from taking measures is the fear that he won't be able to handle a revolt from Hamas but from what you are telling me Arafat may have a public opinion problem if he does this but he won't have a

problem from Hamas itself.

Rantisi: Hamas policy on this point is clear. And the PA knows very well that we have stated this in the past and we are doing it now and I think that the same policy will continue in the future. We will not have any clashes with the PA. We are not willing to see Palestinian conflict.

IMRA: Has anyone from Hamas talked with the Hamas member who, according to the PA revealed that Sharif was killed by Adel Awadallah?

Rantisi: They called us to see him but I refused since he is still being held by the interrogation department. If he is freed I will see him.

Again, according to PA information - from Taib Abdul Rahim - Ghassan [Addasi] met Mahmud Masleh who is inside a Palestinian jail and now I get information that Mahmud Masleh said that the young man told him that the interrogators put pressure on him to tell that story.

I am calling now the PA to allow us to meet with Mahmud Masleh or to make a press conference for him.

IMRA: Last week you were quoted as saying at a rally that the struggle would continue until all of Palestine was liberated including Haifa and other places. What does this mean?

Rantisi: It means that there is this area called Palestine which you call Israel around which a struggle is going on. According to historical facts and religious ones we are the owners of this land. The Israelis say that they came here three thousand years ago and it is their right to establish their state here. We will not give up this land to the Israelis and they won't give it up to us. Accordingly, the struggle and conflict will continue.

IMRA: They are talking about a solution with a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza and part of Jerusalem as the capital. Isn't that a solution?

Rantisi: We announced that we would accept a truce if the Israelis withdraw from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem and evacuate the settlements and a Palestinian state is established. From our side we are ready to then give the Israelis a truce. Not a permanent one - a temporary one.

I would like to make a point about the so called accident. Just twelve hours before the declaration of the PA that Sharif was killed as part of an internal struggle within Hamas, Palestinian

security forces called me and told me that the accident was not a part of an assassination attempt. That Mohiyedine Sharif killed himself while preparing a bomb. I asked them why the injury was in his legs and not in his hands or face if he was preparing a bomb and why he wasn't wearing any clothing - except underwear - when he was turned over to us. This was just twelve hours before their announcement.

#9 Interview: Hamas Spokesman Rantisi -Green Light For Attacks
Aaron Lerner Date: 15 February 2000

IMRA interviewed Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, the Gaza Hamas spokesman and leader who was recently released from detention by the Palestinian Authority, in English, on 15 February 2000:

IMRA: At this stage of developments between Israel and the Palestinians, would it serve the interests of the Palestinian people if there was a returned to armed struggle or would it hurt Palestinian interests.

Rantisi: As you know, the Israelis go head with their aggression against the rights of the Palestinians by building settlements, destroying homes and even carrying out assassinations and they are at the same time talking about peace.

I think that nowadays the Palestinian Authority is sure that the peace process will end to a big zero. It will fail sooner or later and this failure will push the Palestinian people to search for alternatives.

So I believe that they will do that.

IMRA: Right now, today - not in weeks or months - do you think it would serve or hurt the interests of the Palestinians if a bus blew up or there was a bomb in the marketplace to send a message to Israel?

Rantisi: I think you are talking about the interests of the Authority. Not the people. I think that the majority of the Palestinian people do not believe that Oslo serves the interests of the Palestinian people. A bombing would hurt - not the interests of the Palestinian People but of the Palestinian Authority. Not the interests of the Palestinian people.

IMRA: At this stage of the relationship that Hamas has with the Palestinian Authority is the position that Hamas won't interfere with the interests of the Palestinian Authority?

Rantisi: The situation of Hamas all the time is that it will not hurt the interests of the Palestinian people. And Hamas believes that

the interest of the Palestinian people is not Oslo but to continue with the Intafada until we find the solution that gives the Palestinians their rights.

IMRA: And within the framework of the Intafada that would also include the busses and the marketplaces? This kind of thing?

Rantisi: We are against the killing of civilians. Bombs which happened in busses and marketplaces were the answer - they occurred after the killing of civilians by the Israeli side. As Sheik Ahmed Yassin has said many times: if the Israelis stop killing civilian Palestinians then Hamas will stop that.

IMRA: Recently have the Israelis continue to kill civilians?

Rantisi: Recently? I think that just two days ago they killed a Palestinian in the West Bank.

IMRA: So within the framework of a response to that you could have a bus or something else.

Rantisi: As I said to you before, Sheik Ahmed Yassin set the formula. We hope that the Israelis won't kill civilians. As you know, Islam is against the killing of civilians.

IMRA: Let's put it this way: your advise to somebody who can decide between going or not going on a bus or to the marketplace - given that you say that the Israelis have recently killed a civilian - is that it would not be wise to go?

Rantisi: I won't tell anyone. It is the rule of Islam not to kill women and children. Not to kill the elderly.

IMRA: But given the background that you say that the Israelis have killed a Palestinian recently, would it be prudent for someone to take a bus or go to the marketplace?

Rantisi: As I said, the orders of our religion are not to kill children, women, elderly, or civilians. But at the same time Islam gives the Moslems the green light to do with their enemies in the same way - to treat them the same way.

IMRA: And since you say the Israelis recently killed a Palestinian civilian then you would say that there would be a green light for something.

Rantisi: I am not speaking about Rantisi. I am speaking about Islam.

IMRA: Well I am asking you. Do you see that there is a green light?

Would you think that there would be a green light for a response?

Rantisi: Yes. The green light is not from me. The green light is from Islam.

Now we are doing a political wing and a military wing. And so it is up to the military wing. And the military wing has the right to study any incidents to see what to do against that incident. So it is not the political wing that gives the orders or the advice to the military wing.

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